



Vermont Report 2016

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS

Dear Fellow Vermonter,

While the economy has improved significantly since the depths of the Great Recession, far too many families are still struggling just to get by. Real unemployment remains much too high, and many Americans are working longer hours for lower wages. Higher education, which is the pathway into the middle class for many young adults, is increasingly out of reach without students being forced to take on a huge amount of unsustainable debt. Affordable child care and housing are difficult to find and the cost of health care continues to increase rapidly. While Vermont is fortunate to be doing better than many other states, too many of our people continue to hurt financially.

As Vermont's senator, I have long been fighting for issues important to Vermonters: raising the minimum wage to a living wage; making public colleges and universities tuition-free and relieving the burden of student debt; caring for our veterans who have defended our country; transitioning from a fossil fuel economy to a clean energy future to combat climate change; and making sure that everyone, regardless of income, has access to high-quality and affordable health care, including prescription drugs. I will continue to fight against ill-advised efforts to balance the federal budget on the backs of the most vulnerable people in our country — the elderly, the sick, the children and the poor.

Meanwhile, unchecked campaign spending and the corrupting influence of money in our elections is one of the most serious issues facing our democracy today. That is why we must overturn the Supreme Court's disastrous Citizens United decision that opened the floodgates of almost unrestricted campaign spending by billionaires and large corporations. That decision hinges on the absurd notions that corporations are people and that giving large sums of money to a politician in exchange for influence and access does not constitute corruption. It is no wonder it is so difficult to make real progress in Congress on issues of great importance to working families. Ordinary Americans simply do not have the access to power that the super wealthy and huge corporations do.

As I work on these and other important issues, I am often reminded that while our state may be one of the smallest, our actions and principles have, in many ways, set an example for the nation. Together, we must continue our fight to make sure the economy works for all Americans and not just the top 1 percent.

This newsletter includes just a few of the issues I am working on in Washington that will have an impact on life here in Vermont.

If my office can be of help to you in any way, please do not hesitate to call us at 1-800-339-9834.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bernie".

Bernie Sanders
United States Senator

sanders.senate.gov

FIRST-EVER FUNDING OF NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND

Since my time as mayor of Burlington, increasing the availability of affordable housing has been one of my top priorities. One of my proudest achievements as mayor was creating the first municipally-funded housing trust in the United States, a model that was quickly replicated throughout Vermont and the nation to provide affordable homeownership and rental housing for low-income and working families.

Today, in Vermont and throughout this country, we continue to have a major affordable housing crisis. Sadly, 70 percent of low-income households pay more than half of their limited incomes toward housing, leaving little for other necessities such as food, medicine and transportation. That is why I am proud to have authored, and then help lead, a 15-year effort to create the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF), modeled on the successful Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund. The housing trust fund is the first new federal



housing construction program in more than three decades and the first ever targeted to housing low-income households.

This year, for the first time, the National Housing Trust Fund will disburse \$174 million to build, preserve and rehabilitate affordable rental housing across the country, including \$3 million to address pressing housing needs in Vermont.

GROWTH OF VERMONT HEALTH CENTERS

It is my strong belief that every American should have access to high-quality and affordable health care, regardless of their ability to pay. Community health centers are playing a critically important role moving us toward that reality. Community health centers throughout Vermont provide high-quality primary, dental and behavioral health services as well as access to low-cost prescription drugs.

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) now serve one out of every four Vermonters at more than 50 locations across the state, providing professional and compassionate care for patients regardless of their income. As you may know, I fought hard to include \$11 billion in health center funding in the Affordable Care Act. I am proud that, per capita, Vermont leads the nation in terms of FQHC utilization.

I am also pleased that this past year, health centers in St. Johnsbury, Richford and Springfield received more than \$1 million dollars in new funding to expand dental care.

Far too many children and adults go each year without seeing a dentist, even though they may have severe pain, tooth loss and infections. Moreover, this year six health centers – in Arlington, Rutland, Morrisville, Bradford, Richford and Springfield – received \$5.5 million to renovate and expand facilities, increase patient capacity and expand primary care services.



A RIGHT TO KNOW WHAT'S IN OUR FOOD

In 2014, Vermont became the first state in the nation to mandate labeling food that contains genetically modified ingredients (GMOs). This was a major victory for consumers who have a right to know what is in the food they feed their families. Many companies, including Campbell's, Kellogg and Frito-Lay, started labeling their products to comply with Vermont's

law. Unfortunately, Congress thwarted Vermont's progress at the last minute when it passed a much weaker, corporate-backed measure that is confusing and unenforceable. Although the new law preempts Vermont's legislation, I will continue to fight for increased transparency and what is best for our people, rather than what is best for major corporations.

REBUILDING VERMONT'S BRIDGES AND ROADWAYS

It is no secret that the infrastructure in Vermont and throughout the United States is crumbling. Roughly one of every nine bridges in our country is structurally deficient and nearly a quarter are functionally obsolete. Almost one-third of our roads are in poor or mediocre condition. As a member of the Senate committee that oversees federal road and bridge programs, I successfully fought for \$1.1 billion to help Vermont rebuild its roadways. The five-year, \$305 billion transportation bill marks the first time since 2005 that Congress passed a long-term highway bill.

The measure also includes a 10 percent boost in funding for public transit in the first year and an overall

increase of almost 18 percent over five years. This is critically important in terms of providing additional transportation options for Vermonters, including low-income families, senior citizens, veterans and people with disabilities.

The problem isn't just roads and bridges, however. Our airports, railways, drinking water and wastewater systems, harbors and inland waterways, dams and levees, and electric grid are all suffering from a lack of investment. That is why I introduced the Rebuild America Act, a \$1 trillion, five-year plan to modernize the infrastructure our economy depends on, while creating 13 million decent-paying jobs.

FIVE YEARS SINCE IRENE, REPORT WARNS OF CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS

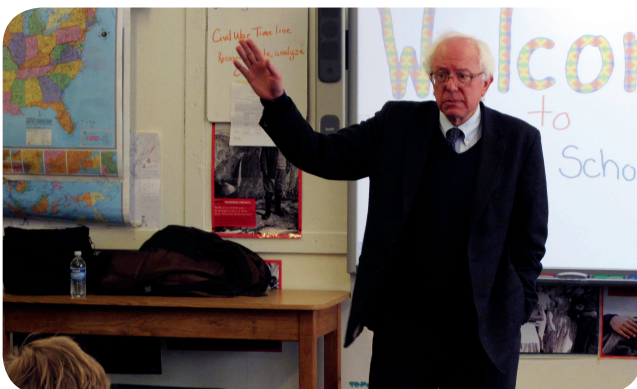
As we mark the fifth anniversary of Tropical Storm Irene, I requested a report from the Congressional Budget Office about the future costs of climate change. The report found that damage from severe weather in future decades is expected to become increasingly common in Vermont and throughout the United States.

Just five years ago, no one thought a northern state like Vermont would be hit by such a strong storm, but that's what happened. Tropical Storm Irene caused tragic loss of life and nearly \$1 billion in damage in our small state. Costs from hurricane damages in the United States are expected to increase significantly in the coming decades because of the effects of climate change, according to the congressional report. This report confirms that Irene may have been the first such storm to hit Vermont, but it likely won't be the last.



We have a moral and a financial obligation to combat climate change. We must aggressively transition away from fossil fuels to energy efficiency and sustainable energy.

GIVING STUDENTS A CHANCE TO SUCCEED



For the past 14 years, No Child Left Behind's system of test-based sanctions and blame-and-shame approach to school accountability has gotten in the way of providing every child a quality education. This past December, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act, which will allow Vermont to implement its own priorities, and includes language I authored to allow states to develop alternatives to national standardized tests. While not perfect, the new law gives Vermont's schools the flexibility they need to provide a quality education for all of our children.

FIGHTING TO LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICES

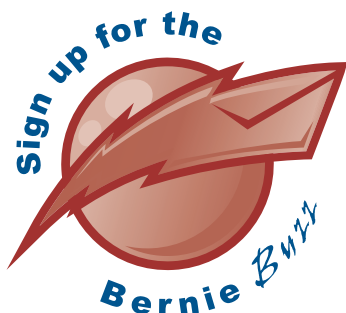
More than 35 million Americans, including roughly 60,000 Vermonters, cannot afford the medication they are prescribed. In the richest country in the history of the world, that is unacceptable. Americans pay, by far, the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs — and those prices are skyrocketing.

In a single year, prescription drug prices are rising by an average of 10 percent, with some individual medications increasing by as much as 4,000 percent. These astronomical price hikes have dangerous, even deadly, implications for those who rely on these medications to survive.

I am working with U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland to investigate drug companies' unconscionable price hikes. We have put forward a comprehensive plan to address rising drug prices. We must allow Medicare to negotiate a better deal on pharmaceuticals, let patients import prescription drugs from Canada and other countries, and levy tougher penalties on corporations who commit fraud. These drug companies are governed by greed — setting prices that put their shareholders ahead of patients whose children have

life-threatening allergies, veterans who need medication to treat illnesses contracted during their military service, and first responders who are trying to save lives.

I am proud Vermont is the first state to pass legislation to require prescription drug transparency, so Vermonters know how much these medications really cost. But more needs to be done. I will continue to hold drug companies accountable for their greed, fight for fair prescription drug prices, and prevent companies from further price-gouging.



Bernie will send you an email update providing you with a fresh perspective on events as only he can. Go to [sanders.senate.gov](https://www.sanders.senate.gov) to sign up.

How Can We Help?

My office has a team of constituent advocates who are dedicated to helping Vermonters on a wide range of issues involving federal agencies. If you have questions, or if you think we can help, please contact my office at 1(800) 339-9834 or visit my website at www.sanders.senate.gov

